

**Proposed Action for the
East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project
U.S. Forest Service
Tahoe National Forest, Truckee Ranger District, Placer, Nevada, and
Sierra Counties, California**

The Forest Service is initiating public scoping for the proposed East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project. The project proposes Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) and Watershed Improvement management actions on National Forest System lands in and around Truckee CA. The project locations are situated within three areas which have been determined to exhibit high levels of motorized recreation use on the Truckee Ranger District: Verdi Ridge, Boca Hill and Prosser Reservoir, and the Hwy 89 south / 06 Road / Big Chief area connecting Truckee and Tahoe City. (Map 1)

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project is to reduce impacts to natural and cultural resources, to maintain or enhance the quantity, quality, and diversity of recreation opportunities on motorized trails, to better manage and reduce road and trail maintenance needs, and to improve overall access to, connectivity on, and public enjoyment of the National Forest Recreational Trails System. Actions are needed due to increased demand for trail riding opportunities, erosion and sedimentation, impacts to natural and cultural resources, ongoing trail maintenance requirements, poor trail drainage, fragmented trails, and public safety concerns. Actions are needed to implement a long term approach to the successful management of National Forest Trail systems while simultaneously meeting our responsibilities to protect and preserve public resources as well as promote safe and sustainable recreational opportunities on public lands. The actions would be designed to be consistent with management direction in the Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP 1990) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (SNFPA ROD 2004).

The Verdi Ridge project area, located on the east side of the Boca and Stampede reservoirs, attracts large numbers of motorized vehicle users. There is a network of OHV legal road segments and OHV designated trail routes however there is no opportunity for designated motorized single track recreation. Increased demand has led to the creation of unauthorized, user created road and trail segments with designs and alignments which threaten the integrity of the watershed and its many riparian corridors, including wetland / meadow complexes, as well as TNF's ability to protect natural and cultural resources. Evaluation and analysis of existing routes in the area has determined many of these road and trail segments to be unsustainable.

The Boca Hill and Prosser Reservoir project area contains popular designated motorcycle trails and OHV use areas including Lloyds trail (17E19), Russell Valley trail (17E20), and the Prosser Pits open riding area. Inadequate trail connectivity however, limits loop riding while current

available trail access is failing to meet a growing demand for Class 1 e-bike riding opportunities. Additionally, some poorly aligned existing designated OHV routes, in particular the 16E11 on the south side of Prosser Reservoir, negatively impact meadow habitat by contributing to accelerated drainage, soil erosion, sedimentation, and damage to vegetation.

The Hwy 89 south / 06 road / Big Chief project area is one of the most heavily used recreation locations on the district owing to its proximity to the center of town. An inventory of existing trails in this area found over 20 miles of unauthorized user created single track motorcycle trail in use. Evaluation showed much of this illegal system to adversely impact natural and cultural resources including California spotted owl habitat, Northern goshawk habitat, hydrologic integrity, and known archaeological sites. A decision [Big Chief Trail Project, 12/19/2017] to obliterate these trail segments has been signed to mitigate these negative impacts but will result in a need to address the considerable demand for motorized single track trail riding opportunity in the area. Tracking of recent use has also shown a steady increase in demand for Class 1 e-bike riding opportunities on single track routes in the area.

Action is needed to mitigate negative impacts to natural and cultural resource concerns due to the effects of poorly aligned authorized routes and unsustainable, unauthorized user created roads and trails.

Field assessments of current road and trail conditions in all three of the defined project areas have identified many poorly aligned route segments, while a lack in the availability of properly aligned and managed system routes has led to a significant increase in the number and length of unauthorized user created trails. Both authorized and unauthorized roads and trails are causing resource damage. Routes were often created by adopting old roads, logging skid trails, historic fire lines, or other existing landscape features. Many of these alignments were not designed for heavy, long-term recreational use. Resource damage and hazardous conditions occur when motorized vehicles travel on these routes and are exacerbated when users ride or drive around rocks, ruts, puddles, and other obstacles creating new trails. Adverse environmental impacts, such as accelerated soil erosion, soil compaction, sediment in stream channels, damage to vegetation, disturbance to sensitive wildlife species, and degradation of cultural resource concerns are occurring. Decommissioning of unauthorized routes is needed where they are redundant or causing extensive resource damage. Repair, maintenance, re-alignment, or decommissioning of existing system routes is needed to reduce future resource damage. Action objectives seek consistency with desired conditions as defined by management direction laid out in the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (SNFPA ROD 2004) and the Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP 1990). These include Goals and Strategies (ROD pp. 32-33), Standards and Guidelines (ROD p. 59 and LRMP pp. V40-V41), and Management Area direction specific to the proposed project zones (LRMP pp. 164, 233, and 287)

Action is needed in order to provide a well-defined, sustainable trail system allowing for effective recreation management of use areas after vegetation management treatments.

The Verdi Ridge and 06 road / Big Chief project areas are currently in the process of planning and or implementation of significant vegetation management projects. Expected condition post

management actions is forest habitat that is more open, healthy, and resilient to fire. These conditions however, also have the potential to lead to an increase in unauthorized route creation. Heavy demand for motorized recreation opportunity is evidenced by the existing inventory of non-system user created trails. Many commenters on the Big Jack East vegetation management project (06 road area) expressed concern about the significant potential for additional unauthorized OHV use after the completion of the project. There is a need for a well-defined, sustainably designed, and adequately signed motorized trail system to both serve users as well as prevent future resource damage. A proactive planning approach is vital to creating a well managed and sustainable recreation system in these two proposed project areas. Action objectives seek consistency with desired conditions as defined by management direction laid out in the Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP 1990). In particular, Management Area direction specific to proposed project zones (LRMP pp. 164, 210, and 366).

Action is needed to increase the number, length, and diversity of motorized recreation opportunities, mitigate potential negative impacts associated to motorized recreation, and to define a sustainable National Forest Transportation System (NFTS).

Public demand for motorized trails on the Truckee Ranger District (TKRD) has been steadily increasing. Nearly a decade ago, during planning for Tahoe National Forest's Motorized Travel Management (MTM) Project (USDA 2010), the public expressed interest in having more motorized single track trail riding opportunities on Tahoe National Forest (TNF, MTM, FEIS, Appendix N). More recently, the Truckee area has seen a marked increase of interest in and demand for Class 1 e-bike riding opportunities. Currently there are only approximately 26 miles of designated single track motorized trail on the TKRD. Tahoe National Forest holds annual Green Sticker open house workshops and public meetings to communicate with the motorized vehicle user community and to hear their requests for motorized trail riding recreation. TNF trails staff attend gatherings with local riding clubs to hear concerns, garner support, and enlist cooperation on volunteer opportunities associated to motorized vehicle route maintenance, trail improvements, and motorized vehicle user education.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) framework guides land managers to provide a variety of opportunities for public use and enjoyment. Within the motorized spectrum, where feasible, managers strive to provide a range of legitimate motorized vehicle riding opportunities that are sustainable and resilient to degradation over time. Protecting resources (Cultural sites, TES species, water quality, and the potential spread of invasive plant communities) and providing for public safety are considered when designing and constructing a motorized trail system accessible to a variety of users. Increasing the variety of motorized trails rated as Beginner to Most Difficult are needed to promote a constantly learning and challenging experience while also fostering opportunities for families to recreate as a group. Action objectives seek consistency with desired conditions as defined by management direction laid out in the Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP 1990). These include Standards and Guidelines (LRMP P.19) and Management Area direction specific to proposed project zones (LRMP p. 164). All three of the designated project zones have a long history of motorized recreation use.

Action is needed to increase loop riding opportunities, improve trail connectivity, and create sustainable developed recreation staging areas.

Each of the project areas contain designated motorized vehicle routes and or trails which do not connect to other motorized trails, thereby limiting loop riding opportunities and trail connectivity. Developing well aligned routes to connect these existing fragmented motorized trails will provide longer, motorized trail rides and increase motorized loop opportunities. Under existing conditions, OHV enthusiasts, especially those on non-highway-legal vehicles, are required to frequently return to their staging location, load their vehicles, travel to the next staging location, and unload their vehicles again before returning to the trail. The lack of a sufficient number of well managed staging areas also creates barriers to public enjoyment of the TNF recreational roads and trails system. Action objectives seek consistency with desired conditions as defined by management direction laid out in the Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP 1990). These include Standards and Guidelines (LRMP P.19) and Management Area direction specific to proposed project zones (LRMP p. 210).

Proposed Action

To respond to the purpose and need described herein, the Forest Service Proposal includes the following actions:

1. **Seasonal Closure Change** - Remove fixed seasonal closure dates in order to manage for sustainable use on approximately 64 miles of authorized National Forest Travel System (NFTS) motorized vehicle routes accessed via the Boca Stampede road, Dog Valley road, and the 72 (Verdi Peak) road. Open and close these roads and trails to public wheeled motor vehicle travel based on monitored conditions of soil moisture and use suitability to be defined in a motorized trail system seasonal operating plan. Criteria for suitability will be defined by a study of local conditions, and based on the report "Wet Weather Management of OHV Trails on National Forests in California" which was prepared for the USFS Pacific Southwest Region by Roger Poff. Install 3 gates to be used in the seasonal management of the affected routes. (Maps 1, 2, 3 & 4)
2. **Route Construction** - Construct approximately 70 miles of new designated motorized single track trail to be added to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) across the three proposed project areas. Approximately 49 miles of new trail would offer opportunity for motorized recreation and loop riding in the Verdi Ridge area. Approximately 3 miles of new trail would offer a motorized single track route connection between the existing Lloyds (17E19) trail and the new proposed Verdi Ridge trail. Approximately 10 miles of new trail would meet demand for designated single track motorized recreation opportunity in the 06 road / Big Chief area. Approximately 8 miles of new trail would offer increased loop riding opportunities, and connectivity between Russell Valley, Boca Hill, and the new proposed Verdi Ridge trail. (Maps 1-7)
3. **Route Realignment** - Reroute approximately 2 miles of existing system road and trail in the Verdi Ridge project area along sections of the 72, 72-1, 72-2-5, 270-8, and 860-2

roads, and in the Prosser Reservoir project area on the 16E11 trail. Each of these road and trail segments currently sit on hydrologically unsustainable alignments. (Maps 1, 2, 3 & 6)

4. Changes to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) –

1. Remove from the NFTS by decommissioning approximately 5.3 miles of road on the 72-9, 72-1-6, 72-12-1, 860-1, 894-3, 270-6, 72-25-10, 270-6-8, and 270-8 roads. Some of these segments are currently shown on the MVUM as open for public wheeled motorized vehicle use. Under the proposed action, these decommissioned road segments would no longer be displayed on the MVUM. (Maps 1-4)
2. Change the maintenance level from ML 2 to ML 1 for approximately 3 miles of route segments on the 72-12, 72-22, 270-4, 270-6-4, 270-8-6, 270-8-5, and 860-5-5 roads (Maps 1-3). These roads are currently shown on the MVUM as open for public wheeled motorized vehicle use. Under the proposed action, they would no longer be displayed on the MVUM.
3. Add, by adoption of currently unauthorized routes into the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS), approximately 1.1 miles of designated Maintenance Level ML 2 road (Maps 1-4). These roads are currently not shown on the MVUM. Under the proposed action they would be displayed on the MVUM as open for public wheeled motorized vehicle use.
4. Add, by adoption of a currently unauthorized route into the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS), approximately .5 miles of designated motorcycle trail (Maps 1 & 2). This route is currently not shown on the MVUM. Under the proposed action the route would be displayed on the MVUM as a class 3 motorized vehicle trail open to motorcycles only.
5. Add approximately 115 acres (Map 4) of designated Travel Management area to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS). Under the proposed action this area would be displayed on the MVUM as open for public wheeled motorized vehicle use.
6. Convert from current Maintenance Level ML 2 road to designated OHV trail approximately .7 miles on the 72-18 road (Maps 1 & 3). This road segment is currently shown on the MVUM as open for public wheeled motorized vehicle use. Under the proposed action the road segment would be displayed as a class 2 motorized vehicle trail open to ATV's and Motorcycles.
7. Designate approximately 35.5 miles of existing non-motorized trails (16E05, 16E09, 16E30, 16E85, and 16E86 shown on maps 1 and 4-7) as open for Class 1 e-bike motorized vehicle use, adding them to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS). Under the proposed action, these trails would be displayed on the MVUM as designated wheeled motorized vehicle trails open only to Class 1 e-bikes (see definition of Class 1 e-bike, page 7). These trails would remain open to existing non-motorized use. Potential environmental impacts and user conflicts were carefully considered in selecting existing trails to propose for Class 1 e-bike use. The proposed trails are not popular equestrian trails; are not experiencing known recreation user group conflicts; have no substantial existing resource impacts; and have trail management objectives specifically aimed at mountain bike use.

5. **Route Decommission** - Obliterate and restore approximately 41 miles of unsustainable, unauthorized, user created road and trail segments located across the proposed project areas. (Maps 1-6)
6. **Staging Area Creation** - Develop or improve 11 managed recreation staging locations within the three proposed project areas including 2 for the 06 road / Big Chief project area (Maps 1 & 7), 2 for the Boca Hill / Prosser Reservoir project area (Maps 1 & 6), and 7 for the Verdi Ridge project area. (Maps 1-5)
These shall be defined as:
 - A - Strategically located to afford access to designated recreation Trails.
 - B – Offering enough space for adequate parking and the loading and unloading of recreational equipment.
 - C - Containing bathroom Facilities.
 - D – Adequately signed with maps, information on available routes and other recreational activities, and interpretive information designed to mitigate against potential conflicts between multiple user groups.
7. **Route and Staging Location Management** - Install boulders, signage, and additional barrier structures if necessary at locations around Prosser Reservoir, on the 06 Rd., and along sections of the proposed Verdi Ridge trail in order to direct travel, restrict trail widening, and prevent resource damage in sensitive areas. Install boulders at proposed managed recreation staging areas to delineate parking area boundaries and prevent resource damage.
8. **Watershed Protection** - Construct bridges or undertake hardening measures (dependent on individual site evaluation) at 21 perennial stream crossings, riparian zones, and or meadow corridors in the Verdi Ridge project area and at one perennial stream and meadow crossing in the Prosser Reservoir project area. (Maps 1-5)
9. **Invasive Plant Treatment** – Treat approximately 25.5 acres for two priority invasive plant species (Musk thistle - *Carduus nutans* and Canada thistle - *Cirsium arvense*) (Maps 1-4) using a combination of chemical (Aminopyralid) and mechanical methods (see table 2). Aminopyralid is a selective herbicide (i.e. only controls a certain type of plant, while leaving other plants unaffected). It is primarily used to control broadleaf weeds, certain annual grasses, and certain woody plants and vines, particularly plant species of the aster family. It provides both preemergent and post emergent control (i.e. prevents seeds from germination as well as kills plants after they emerge from soil). Additional infestations may be discovered and prioritized for treatment. For chemical use reference information see Pesticide Fact Sheet: Aminopyralid (EPA 2005) and Aminopyralid Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment (SERA 2007).

Best Management Practices (BMP's) for trail construction as identified in the Forest Service Trails Handbook (FSH 2309.18) and Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Trails (EM-7720-103) as well as management requirements to protect public resources would be incorporated into trail design and construction.

Public Participation

This project is subject to 36 CFR 218 Project-level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process (Parts A and B). Only those individuals and entities who have submitted timely, specific written comments regarding a proposed project or activity during designated public comment periods are eligible to file an objection (36 CFR 218.25). Each individual or entity must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

The Forest Service will accept comments on this proposal for 30 days following publication of the Legal Notice in Grass Valley's The Union newspaper. The legal notice is the exclusive means for calculating the timeframe of the comment period. Commenters should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Additional detailed information about this project is also available by contacting John Groom, Recreation Staff Officer on the Truckee Ranger District or John Brokaw, OHV Program Manager on the Truckee Ranger District, Tahoe National Forest, 10811 Stockrest Springs Rd. Truckee CA 96161
(530) 587-3558

Class 1 eMTB - is defined as a low-speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.

Table 2. Proposed Invasive plant Treatment methods

Treatment	Description
Chemical	General requirements: No aerial application is allowed. Maximum of one initial and one follow-up herbicide treatment will be allowed annually. Herbicides application will be conducted by a licensed applicator and will be in accordance with all label instructions, state and federal regulations and FS direction. Herbicide is limited to aminopyralid (0.11 lb a.e./ac). Adjuvants may be added, but only non-NPE surfactants would be used.
Broadcast spray (chemical)	Truck-based boom sprayers or backpack sprayers. Truck-based boom sprayers are restricted to within 50 feet of state and county roads. Treatment applied to all vegetation; however, spray can be shut off to skip sensitive areas.
Spot spray (chemical)	Backpack sprayer. Treatment directed at target species only.
Contact (chemical)	Direct contact with individual target plants only. Methods may include: Cut stump—concentrated herbicide is applied to cut surfaces with a wipe-style applicator Dip & clip—similar to cut stump, but cutting tool is first dipped in concentrated herbicide, then used to cut target plant Wipe/Drizzle—concentrated herbicide is applied directly onto target plant with a wick, wipe or drizzle applicator.
Mechanical	Removal of vegetation using hand help tools (i.e. clippers, hand shovel)

